ENGLISH SPIRITUAL LIFE IN POETRY

GEORGE W. MORREL

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THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE POST-REFORMATIONAL CHURCH OF ENGLAND AS REFLECTED IN ITS RELIGIOUS POETRY

By

George W. Morrel
B.A., University of the South, 1937

A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the degree of

BACHELOR OF DIVINITY

in the

CHURCH DIVINITY SCHOOL OF THE PACIFIC

at

Berkeley, California

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CHAPTER I

THE RELATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND POETRY

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THE RELATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND POETRY

Religion is that aspect of man's activity which relates him to God; in religion man deals with the overtones of the common life, especially with the problem of the meaningfulness of the totality of circumstance. Religion differs from philosophy in the treatment of its materials, even though the observable sum of the materials be the same; philosophy is an attempt to describe the materials in the most fundamental aspect with which the intellect can deal, whereas religion represents an effort to discover their significances, in an intelligible perspective, and then to relate the discovery to the common life in a dynamic fashion. Religion, therefore, is primarily life, rather than primarily thought. Religion is in essence direct and immediate experience, although the latter is important and has its legitimate place as philosophical or doctrinal theology.

Consequently the two phases of religion are indicated: the mystical-devotional and the doctrinal-intellectual. The former looks toward the vocabulary of art,

while the latter looks toward the vocabulary of philosophy. This is true only as a general and fundamental tendency, to be sure, since theology quite consciously uses some of the methods and materials of the arts, and the cultus, in all its broad ramifications, deals constantly with concepts familiar to the philosopher. Nevertheless--and this is particularly true of Christianity--these two great streams are the warp and woof of that beautiful fabric which is the religious heritage of mankind.

If then, there are aspects of religion whose faces are turned toward the arts, it is evident that some bond of affinity must exist between religion and (to become specific) poetry. Poetry is a term almost as elusive of definition as is religion. Broadly conceived, it is that type of literature which deals with reality in mythical, symbolical, and rhythmic terms. There are various, more specific molds into which poetry is usually cast, the most elemental being that of rhythmic and metred writing. It is the fact of metre, of measure, both of idea and form, which is the peculiarity of poetry. Rhythm and measure each presuppose the other, and are hence actually concomitant. Poetry is a reflection of the fundamentally rhythmic character of existence within time and the fundamentally metred character of existence within space. But, having reflected each, it points beyond both, as any dimension is seen to

be such only as over against still another dimension, and time-space is comprehensible only when seen against the foil of eternity. This brings poetry to the area of religion.

The deep-lying patterns of poetry being at the point of impingement between time-space and eternity, then, the problem of the transcendent necessarily presents itself. But this is the same transcendent, the same numinous, before which we saw that the life of religion is lived. Therefore poetry and religion stand on the same ground and look up into the same eternal order. They both reach out for significances and perspectives, and both in some sense attempt to relate their findings to the categories of daily human life. Philosophy can afford to think in a cloister, as can, perhaps, pure science, but both religion and art must spring from the problems and aspirations of the life of man in order to be relevant. The perspective of both religion and art must be a perspective on the scene of the human predicament.

Nevertheless, it is a perspective from the vantage-point of transcendence, so to speak. Poetry and religion alike point to the area of ultimate meanings, which experience indicates to be an area of supra-conceptuals of which we cannot speak except in symbol and myth. The descriptive functions of prose and of philosophy are not possible in that area, or there would be no valid distinction of essence between poetry and prose or between religion and

of eternity. While poetry is the area of religion,
time-space is comprehensible only when seen against the full
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philosophy. Description, to be differentiated from symbolic representation, must be exact, accurate, presentative rather than representative. Both poetry and religion deal with material of a transcendent, supra-conceptual and supra-verbal character, which can be spoken of only with conscious inaccuracy, in the language of symbol.

The use of symbol pointing to an area of transcendence is the final tie between poetry and religion. Poetry, too, is life, rather than formal intellectual dialectic. It involves conscious experience, usually with a definite emotional content. Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility" indicates that the structure of poetic experience and its subsequent intellectualization is distinctly analogous to the mystical-doctrinal transition in religion.

Furthermore, the human ingredients with which both deal are ultimately reducible to the same categories: the relation of the individual to the overworld and the relation between souls within the structures of human society. The stuff of the one is the stuff of the other,--not in any complete sense, perhaps, but in the sense of common aspirations (often unconscious to literature, often garbled to religion), common methods, and, above all, a common language.

The common language of poetry and religion--myth and symbol--is nowhere so apparent as in liturgy. Liturgy

is, in its deepest essence, an act of praise and proclamation. Now the hymn is likewise a vehicle of praise and proclamation, and is hence a binding tie between liturgy and poetry of the purely literary type. This hymnodic principle is essential to liturgy, and is essential to poetry that can be called specifically religious. Poetry in the Church necessarily reflects the liturgical attitude and principle. The mystical element underlying both religion and poetry of a religious trend normally expresses itself in praise, which is, of course, addressed to the Eternal. As this element becomes more completely rationalized (cf. the transition toward formal doctrine in theology), it may take the form of proclamation, and become a statement about the experience, addressed to men.

It is evident from all this that a certain factor of personal experience, with a definite emotional content, underlies both religion and poetry. This experience we might with essential accuracy term mystical, in the broad sense. Without raising the problem of religious experience, which is in itself a broad and important subject, we might simply accept the obvious fact that there is that experience, and, without advancing detailed arguments as to its subjectivity or objectivity, assume for it at least an empirical and functional validity.

Of all groups within Christendom, the Anglican Church has exhibited, perhaps, the most pronounced evidences

of a deep literary conscicusness. The heavy emphasis laid upon the Word in the reformational Anglican formularies may indeed be a classic manifestation of this. The peculiar place of the English nation in the history of poetry is a factor to be interrelated with this emphasis of the national religion; in fact, of all the nations of the modern world, England offers the most brilliant poetry. English poetry is rivalled only by that of classic Greece.

The Book of Common Prayer represents, in perhaps its best form, the wedding of religion and literature in the English heritage. Together with the Authorized Version of the Bible, the Prayer Book is the norm of pure English style, and to it the English rhetorician looks. That its superb beauty is entirely a matter of literary style may well be questioned; that it surges forth from deep religious feeling is entirely more probable. In the conjunction of the two lies the power of that great reformational literary-religious monument.

CHAPTER II

CERTAIN REPRESENTATIVE ANGLICAN POETS AND THEIR EXPRESSION OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH OF ENGLAND SINCE THE REFORMATION

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Edmund Spenser--the Poet of the Reformation

The Reformation in the Church of England was more than merely an ecclesiastical movement; it was the overt expression of social and cultural, as well as religious forces, that had been at work for centuries. This statement is indeed almost a truism, but the truth of it is all too easily overlooked. Like all social movements having their roots deep in the historical past, the Reformation was a growth and a transition rather than a sudden, categorical cleavage; hence it is difficult to set precisely the date which marks the Reformation in England. "On 17th November, 1534, it was enacted that the King should be accepted and reputed the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England called Anglicana Ecclesia;"[1] this date--1534--is as good as any to establish the axis or turning-point of the Reformation of the Church of England. It is important to understand, however, that the movement was a profoundly social and cultural, as

[1] Charles Hole, A Manual of English Church History, p. 141.

well as ecclesiastical, one and extended over a period of years, having as its climax the Elizabethan Settlement and as its culmination the Prayer Book of 1662.

The Reformation was more or less simultaneous, in England at least, with the analogous secular movement known as the Renaissance. This latter movement was marked by a revival of classical learning, a revival of scientific interest and thought, and the rise of the modern national State. The roots of all these are to be found in the revival of interest in antiquity and the classical culture of the Graeco-Roman world, and this return to Graeco-Roman ideologies in certain basic areas of life gave rise to the national State, which is based upon the State of antiquity rather than upon the ecclesiastical internationalism of the Middle Ages. This rise of the national idea is the bond between Renaissance and Reformation in England, as the freeing of the Church from Papal claims was an assertion of national rights of Englishmen as much as it was a purifying of theology or a revision of the liturgy.

Both movements come together and are, in fact, identified in the poetry of Edmund Spenser. Spenser is the type of Elizabethanism--as much so as is Sir Walter Raleigh or Sir Philip Sidney. He was born in London in 1553, educated in Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, from which University he took the master's degree in 1578, and spent the most fruitful years of his life living as a country

squire in Ireland and dedicating poems to his Good Queen Bess. After having written one of the longest, as well as most exquisite, poems in the language--The Faerie Queen--he died at the early age of forty-five.

Spenser's monumental place in the history of religious poetry is due to the fact that it was he who articulated, often unconsciously, the cultural and religious principles of the English Reformation. Spenser was strongly influenced by the religious views and ideals that prevailed at Pembroke Hall.

> Cambridge protestantism was, at this time, sharply divided by the dispute between the strict disciplinarians in the matter of Church ritual, headed by Whitgift, master of Trinity, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, and those followers of Cartwright, Lady Margaret professor of Divinity, from whom, in course of time, came forth the Martin Marprelate faction. Pembroke Hall seems to have occupied a middle position in this conflict. Its tradition was emphatically Calvinistic. Ridley, Bishop of London, one of the most conspicuous of the Marian martyrs, had been master of the college...and the headship, when Spenser matriculated, had passed to Young, at a later date Bishop of Rochester, whose Calvinism was no less marked than that of his predecessors.[2]

Spenser was in sympathy with the general views of his master, and eulogized both him and Grindal when their mild treatment of the Dissenters brought them into disrepute with the Queen. Many allusions in The Shepherd's

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[2] Cambridge History of English Literature, v. III, p. 242.

Calendar indicate that Spenser tended to be sympathetic with Cartwright and the extremely Low Churchmen in opposing the "remnants of Popery" in the Prayer Book.

The second important strain that goes to shape the religious attitudes of Spenser comes not from the Reformation at all, but from the Renaissance. It is his Platonism. Platonism in the Reformation period implied "an interpretation of the Holy Scriptures in the light of Plato's philosophy studied, generally, at the fountain-head, and particularly in the dialogues of The Republic, Timaeus, and the Symposium."[3] In the Faerie Queen Spenser speaks of the garden of Adonis where Amoret grew up--an idea essentially Platonic, symbolizing the ideal world and the life before birth:

> In that same Gardin all the goodly flowres
> Wherewith dame nature doth her beautify,
> And decks the girlonds of her Paramoures,
> Are fetcht: there is the first seminary
> Of all things that are born to live and die.[4]

In that ideal world "infinite shapes of creatures there are bred," and their substance is eternal though "chaunged and often altered to and froe." This problem of eternity within mutability is well-known to readers of Spenser, and is found

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[3] Cambridge History of English Literature, v. III, p. 242.

[4] Faerie Queen, iii, 6, 29.

in Shelley and all other poets who treat of metaphysical themes and who fall under the Platonic tradition.

Spenser views Beauty as a subsistent abstraction, a spiritual thing, the apprehension of which brings us into the spiritual realm. But Beauty and Truth are both found only through the path of suffering and struggle. This suffering and struggle are the gateways to the life of the spirit, as Spenser intricately explains in one of the sustained allegories of The Faerie Queen: that of Una and the Red Cross Knight.[5] The Red Cross Knight is weak and wan; Una therefore leads him to the house of Caelia or Holiness, and there he goes through a spiritual experience, "which few will understand who do not know"--the sense of sin, remorse, and repentance. This essentially evangelical notion indicates the deep and significant effect of Cambridge Calvinism on the religious life and thought of Spenser.

In the Hymne of Heavenlie Love he tells how the world began in God's love:

> Before this Worlds Great Frame, in which al things
> Are now containd, found any being-place,
> Ere flitting Time could wag his eyas wings
> About that mightie bound which doth embrace
> The rolling Spheres, and parts their houres by space,
> That High Eternall Powre, which now doth move
> In all these things, mov'd in it selfe by love.[6]

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[5] Faerie Queen, i, 8.

[6] Hymne of Heavenlie Love, 1-7.

As has been pointed out, the problem of change and flux within the created order is an important one with Spenser.

"Nothing is sure that growes on earthly ground."[7]

Beauty and Truth are fixed; it is the human order that decays, that is unstable. In a passage reminiscent of St. Augustine, Spenser points out that the dialectical alternative to mutability is the Eternal God:

> Then gin I thinke on that which Nature sayd,
> Of that same time when no more Change shall be,
> But steadfast rest of all things, firmly stayd
> Upon the pillours of Eternity,
> That is contrayr to Mutabilitie;
> For all that moveth doth in Change delight;
> But thence-forth all shall rest eternally
> With Him that is the God of Sabaoth hight:
> O! that great Sabaoth God, grant me
> that Sabaoths sight![8]

The Christian and Platonic elements in the religious thought of Spenser are not always merely parallel, but indeed are often conjunctive or even identified.

> Love and Beauty sway the world. Bodies will be reduced to naught, golden hair to dust; eternal beauty will ever shine:
>
> ...That faire lampe, from whose
> celestiall ray
> That light proceedes, which kindleth
> lovers fire,
> Shall never be extinguisht nor decay.

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[7] Faerie Queen, i, 9, 11.

[8] Ibid., v. iii.

> Go to Beauty, almost surely will you meet Virtue also: only by a rare exception, and one contrary to nature, are they sometimes divided. Love is a "celestiall harmonie.[9]

The Reformational and Calvinistic strain in Spenser's thought are thus qualified by an almost naturalistic touch of the beauty-truth-goodness emphasis which characterized both antiquity and the Renaissance in their most outstanding aspects. The stern Augustinian God of Calvin, majestic and sovereign, is identified with the Beauty that is also Goodness. Such a blending is by no means inconsistent, at least no more inconsistent than the English Reformation itself, which combined strongly theocentric and strongly anthropocentric strains. The balance and delicate poise that characterize Anglicanism in its truest, deepest, and most autonomous form have often been called mere inconsistency by the hasty or the ill-informed. Spenser represents (as does even Milton, who was not an Anglican, to a lesser degree) this in concrete form. What lesser men have considered incompatibles, Spenser and Anglican thinkers at their best have considered complementary.

John Donne and the Caroline Period

The Seventeenth Century in the English Church was really a unity, all of one mind--broken only by the interlude of Puritan Rebellion and the Commonwealth. The early Stuart

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[9] Jusserand, A Literary History of the English People, v. IV, p. 449.

Church and the Restoration Church had in common a certain set of basic attitudes which made them differ more from the Anglican Church of the Sixteenth Century and of the Eighteenth Century than they differed from each other. The Seventeenth Century (except, be it said again, for the Puritan interlude) was England's "Cavalier Century" and the English Church of that century was a Cavalier Church. The Church of the Sixteenth Century was self-consciously Reformational, and locked to the cultural centers of Reformational activity, which were on the Continent: it tended toward Calvinism and Nationalism. The Church of the Seventeenth Century exhibited a spirit that was more cosmopolitan, and even debonair. It was markedly less suspicious of ceremony and of beauty, and was less afraid of its own past. Tradition, therefore, assumed a more articulate part in ecclesiastical thought during the Seventeenth Century. That is not to say that the Jacobean and Caroline Church was any less truly a Reformed Church, or any less a National Church; it was "High Church" not in the sense of leaning back towards Rome, but in the sense of being Tory in tendency, for with the Revolution of 1688 and the triumph of Whig thought, the Eighteenth Century began--for the Church at least.

Many have thought that the Anglicanism of the Seventeenth Century is Anglicanism in its classic form,

and for this view there is much to be said. The Reformation's indelible imprint was there, in the form of purified Tradition,--Tradition made pure, restored to its original integrity through a process of culling away the extraneous, the untrue, and the unnecessary. The Church that had driven out heresy and corruption was the same Church that had existed before the heresy and corruption had arisen: it was not a different Church, still less a Church inter alia. Of this continuous-yet-reformed point of view, which represented the English Reformation in its essence, Seventeenth Century Anglican thought was aware. The divines of that era, even those whom history terms "the High-Churchmen," were not afraid of the word "Protestant," for they knew that their Church was Protestant, not against the True Faith, but against distortions and heresy, just as the Church of the fourth century was Protestant against the heresy of Arianism.

In Reformation thought

> ...perhaps...there was only one cardinal truth, one dogma--God's mercy and loving-kindness. Renunciation of all worldly sentiments through faith in this dogma became the only salvation; the emotional attitude became a fixed one, but never perfectly resolved itself into intellectual equivalents. The union was still with God, but there was no mediation through reason.
>
> Some such hypothesis is necessary for the understanding of the phase of English poetry with which we are now dealing. It explains the phenomenon of emotional surrender, and it accounts for the poet's subjectivity.

> He is utterly dependent on God's grace, and his religious duty as a poet is to expound that state of grace by exploring the recesses of his own soul.
>
> "The new philosophy calls all in doubt." Divine or metaphysical poetry begins with doubt. Donne himself, who is the greatest poet of this phase of English poetry, illustrates the fulness of this mental strife, and the intensity of his emotional reaction to the spirit of scepticism wrought an expressive idiom to which all the poets of the metaphysical school were in some measure indebted.[10]

John Donne was born in London in the year 1573.

> The most interesting thing we know about his youth is that his parents were strongly Roman Catholic, and made every effort to bring him up in that religion. He was sent to the University of Oxford in his twelfth year that he might avoid the oath, which was not administered to those under sixteen, and which, as a Catholic, he could not take.[11]

He seems to have begun by studying law, and later abandoned it for theological learning. It is said of him that his outstanding characteristic was intensity, both as a student and afterward, and, judging by his poetry, this analysis must be largely accurate. After holding a number of political posts, Donne entered the ministry at the age of forty-two. He advanced rapidly, and at last became Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. His fame as a preacher was

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[10] Herbert Read, Phases of English Poetry, pp. 60-62.

[11] Gamaliel Bradford, A Naturalist of Souls, pp. 29-30.

great, and many of his written sermons make strikingly good reading even today. In fact, his prose works exceed his verse in quantity.

Donne, is, of course, ordinarily classed in the group of "Metaphysical Poets"--along with Herbert, Crashaw, Herrick, Vaughan, and others. Although Donne reached maturity before most of these men, he is generally considered to belong to the same school of thought. The characteristics of the religious writings of the Metaphysical Poets are the characteristics of Anglican thought, generally speaking. In point of time, Donne was half Elizabethan, but in point of doctrine, he belongs to the age of Laud and the Cavaliers. As a poet, he has many defects, chief of which are a difficlt and often self-conscious style, marked by the literary device known as conceits,[12] and the defect of coarseness. His metre is often rough and jarring, and he is quite lacking in that finesse which characterized the Neo-classical poets. But for acute and relevant insight into human life and the human struggle, Donne is seldom surpassed.

> The religious poetry of John Donne is notable for the drama it outlines in a manner calculated to wring from all of us the

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12 i. e., a highly metaphorical use of words, usually in a strained sense.

> confession: "There speaks a part of me!" It is verse of a man torn between Heaven and Hell, between the delights of the world and peace in submission to the Divine will. This poet's earlier verse had been, often enough, carnal and sophisticated, though always lit up with flashes of an intense love of purity. His later work, however, is almost purely spiritual in quality. Holy Sonnets, written about 1617, express a soul torn between the ecstasies and the discomforts of conversion. They constitute perhaps the greatest, certainly the most realistic, of all spiritual sonnet sequences. Of course they do not breathe the peace of the mystics; but such phrases as "Batter my heart, three-person'd God" can never be forgotten.[13]

The Arminianism which found its fullest ecclesiastical expression in the period in the person of Archbishop Laud, "may be said in a general way, as against Calvinism, to ascribe much to the power and initiative of the human will."[14] It evidences traces of the humanistic emphases which began with Erasmus and found voice in the flowering of the Renaissance. Donne combines devotional mysticism with this humanism. He is never so much concerned with God Himself, or with the purposes of God, as would be a Calvinist, as with the human response to God and, specifically, with John Donne's response to God. The intensely personal note is evident throughout the Holy Sonnets--almost to the point of egocentricity.

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[13] From The Poems of John Donne, Oxford, 1912.

[14] Hole, op. cit., p. 277.

"Thou hast made me, and shall Thy work decay?"[15] Thus begins the sequence--with a personal and egoistic chord. Beauty and rationalism are both consequent upon the category of subjectivity, and both were characteristics of the Church life and thought of the Seventeenth Century. The egocentric is likely to be intense, and so was Donne. He was a profound and penetrating thinker, a man of wit, of paradox, of conflict. "The learning of the Seventeenth Century was not specialized, but broad and inclusive;"[16] and Donne's own thought was in conformity to this. The combination of intensity, which tends toward focus, toward a narrowing of limits, and breadth, which tends toward catholicity and a widening of limits, present in Donne make him the paradoxical, and perhaps also the Anglican, thinker that he is.

> I am a little world made cunningly
> Of Elements, and an Angelic sprite,
> But black sin hath betray'd to endless night
> My world's both parts, and, oh, both parts must die....[17]

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15 Donne, Holy Sonnets, I, l. 1.

16 Osgood, The Voice of England, p. 217.

17 Donne, Holy Sonnets, V, ll. 1-4.

Here is conflict, yet self-conscious, indeed, almost self-congratulatory, conflict. This is both intense and personal--perhaps too personal. And yet it is unquestionably founded upon genuine religious experience: Donne may be dramatizing, but he is not theorizing.

Some suggestive lines regarding Donne's thought on the subject of ecclesiology are to be found in the eighteenth poem of the sequence, which begins

> Show me, Dear Christ, Thy Spouse, so bright and clear.
> What! is it She, which on the other shore
> Goes richly painted? or which robb'd and tore
> Laments and mourns in Germany and here?
> Sleeps she a thousand, then peeps up one year?
> Is she self truth and errs? now new, now outwore?
> Doth she, and did she, and shall she evermore
> On one, on seven, or like adventuring knights,
> First travail we to seek and then make Love?[18]

Here we have direct evidence of both Donne's Catholic background and early training and also the general High-Church and Laudian tendency of his temperament. He asks which is the true Church--and, of course, does not attempt to give an answer to the question he has raised. In lines 1-4 he considers the Catholic doctrine

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[18] Donne, Holy Sonnets, XVIII, ll. 1-10.

of the Church, and seems to approve it by implication in line 5. He frankly considers the Protestant, and specifically the Puritan, view of the Church as being essentially invisible, to be elusive and tenuous. In our search for the true Church must we go forth on a hunt, "like adventuring knights," and then after having given chase, only then embrace the true Church? The note of satire which one detects in all this is evidence that Donne, together with his Laudian contemporaries, held the Catholic view of the Church as being a definite visible fellowship, sanctified by the indwelling Holy Ghost given to it. This would also accord completely with the general reverence of Tradition and the past, both in ecclesiastical and civil phases, so characteristic of the Cavalier mind. And Donne, with the era he represents, is, after all, a Cavalier.

In The Litany and The Cross, less significant works of Donne, we have simply an extension of the basic religious attitudes--personalistic, High-Church (yet not without a sincerely evangelical sense), courtly, paradoxical--that distinguish The Holy Sonnets as representative of the Cavalier Church that was the establishment in the age of "Court civilization."

William Cowper and Eighteenth Century Evangelicalism

> A great poet, though not one of the greatest, is indebted in no small way to the religious revival of the eighteenth century for part of the creative force of his inspiration, and thus can legitimately be connected with it. Methodism, it must be remembered, is not the only form of this revival. In its turn it provokes in the ranks of the Anglican clergy a counter-movement as spiritually zealous in purpose as the other, and one which will continue to assert itself with the following century: evangelicalism.[19]

This was written of William Cowper, who, among all the English poets of the Eighteenth Century, best represents that religious movement of his era which was called Evangelicalism within the establishment and Methodism without. The first decades of the century were not promising ones for religion and the Church. Spiritual life was at a very low ebb in England at that time.

> Spiritual religion, the source of Puritan grandeur and of the poetry of Milton, was almost extinct; there was not much more of it among the Nonconformists, who had now become to a great extent mere Whigs, with a decided Unitarian tendency. The Church was little better than a political force, cultivated and manipulated by political leaders for their own purposes. The Bishops were either politicians or theological polemics collecting

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19 Legouis and Cazamian, A History of English Literature, p. 958.

> trophies of victory over free-thinkers as titles to higher preferment. The inferior clergy, as a body, were far nearer in character to Trulliber than to Dr. Primrose; coarse, sordid, neglectful of their duties, shamelessly addicted to sinecurism and pluralities, fanatics in their Toryism and in attachment to their corporate privileges, cold, rationalistic, and almost heathen in their preachings, if they preached at all.[20]

It was upon such a religious world that the Evangelical revival dawned. Probably at no other time in the history of England, since its conversion to the faith, had popular religion been so empty, so sterile, and so inconsequential. The ecclesiastical religion of the time was largely an external affair, of social compulsions and political conformities enforced for purely secular and political reasons. The revival began as a popular movement, led by the Reverend John Wesley and the Reverend George Whitefield, both Anglican clergymen. Unlike the classical evangelicalism of Luther and Calvin, which had a very objective emphasis, the Wesleyan evangelicalism was preoccupied with subjective states and situations. It was concerned less with pure doctrine, in the strict and formal sense, than with practical Christian life and works. Mr. Wesley's own theology was Arminian.

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20 Goldwin Smith, Life of Cowper, p. 4.

> Wesley's antagonism to the Calvinistic doctrine of election and its correlate of exclusive divine agency in conversion was intense, and remained so through his life.... The central point in Wesley's creed was always justification by faith alone. In Wesley it was not valued predominantly as an ethical theory, but as being identified, according to his view, with the interests of practical religion.[21]

The revival began within the fold of the Established Church, and in spite of the schismatic Methodist movement (the more radical aspects of which Mr. Wesley himself always opposed), largely remained there. Its outstanding virtues were its awakening of people to a Christian life, and its loyalty to the Reformational principles.

> As Churchmen the promoters of the evangelical revival were loyal to the English Constitution both in Church and State, and were cordially attached to the Prayer-book, Articles, and Homilies of the Church of England.[22]

Therefore it must be remembered that Evangelicalism was an Anglican phenomenon, and not primarily a sectarian one, as is too often supposed. It centered around an emphasis on personal religion and individual salvation; although inevitably issuing in social results, in its essence it was pietistic. Whatever there was of subjectivism in the

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21 G. P. Fisher, History of Christian Doctrine, pp. 391-92.

22 Hole, op. cit., p. 382.

> Wesley's message to the Calvinistic Methodists or elsewhere was a comprehensive call to active divine energy in conversion and [illegible] and receiving by through his life.... The eventual source in Wesley's crowd was always justification by faith alone. In Wesley it was not validated predominantly as an official theory, but as deep identification, according to him view, with the imperative of practical religion.[1]

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> As [illegible] the [illegible] of the evangelical revival were loyal to the English Church [illegible] both in doctrine and [illegible], and were cordially attached to the [illegible]-book, [illegible], and homilies of the Church of [illegible].

[illegible] it must be remembered that Evangelicalism was an Anglican movement, and not primarily a sectarian one, as is too often supposed. It contained strong emphasis on personal religion and individual salvation; although inevitably leading in such results, by its essence it was pietistic. However there was of subjectivism in the

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[1] R. B. Cleaver, Wesley as Evangelical Catholic, pp. 129-30.

[2] Cf. Loc. cit., p. 36.

aestheticism and rationalism of the Seventeenth Century was carried to its full development in the two chief strains of Eighteenth Century religion--Deism and Evangelicalism. Much of that which is implicit in Donne is explicit in Cowper, the poet of Eighteenth Century Evangelical religion.

Cowper was born on November fifteenth, 1731 (old style), and spent most of his life in seclusion and retirement in Olney. The Rev. John Newton was curate of Olney while Cowper lived there. Newton was famous in both the Evangelical wing of the Church and in the Methodist group; he had been a seaman and a slave-trader before his conversion, and was indeed a brand plucked from the very heart of the burning. He was unquestionably one of the greatest Evangelical influences underlying the religious verse of Cowper.

In spite of a certain provincialism of outlook, due largely to geographical isolation, Cowper is to be noticed for his universal sympathy for the entire human race. His interest was not in special groups or classes, but in the whole human race.

> ...But the revolutionary idea of the unity of Man was in Cowper's mind grounded on a theological one, on God as the common Maker of Man. And his work for men was to make them out of sin and death into life with God, for they are
>
> "Bone of my bone, and kindred souls to mine."[23]

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[23] S. A. Brooke, Theology in the English Poets, p. 42.

...But the revolutionary ideas of the early
of man was in Cowper's mind grounded once
theological one, on God as the common Parent
of Man. And his work for man was to make
them one of who are dear into His sight
Son, for they are
Some of my hours, who planted souls
To shine.

Cowper was intensely and painfully conscious of the universality of sin, and his quick sympathy for every human being sprang from his insight into the nature and consequences of human separation from God. This conviction of sin took a very concrete and particularized form with Cowper--as is generally the case with Evangelicals in the Reformed tradition.

> ...His Calvinism, which he seems to have had before meeting with Newton, combined with the tendency to madness in him, had produced a religious insanity, which, occurring at intervals through his life, finally fixed its talons on his heart, and never let him go, even in the hour of death. He believed himself to be irrevocably doomed by God.[24]

> Man disavows, and Deity disowns
> me:
> Hell might afford my miseries a
> shelter;
> Therefore hell keeps her every
> mouths all
> Bolted against me.
>
> Him the vindictive rod of angry
> justice
> Sent quick and howling to the
> centre headlong;
> I, fed with judgment, in a fleshly
> tomb, am
> Buried above ground.[25]

Here we see the darker aspects of Evangelicalism, especially of that variety derived from the Calvinistic

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[24] Brooke, op. cit., p. 49.

[25] Cowper, Complete Works, Oxford ed., p. 290, ll. 9-12, 17-20.

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[24] Brooke, op. cit., p. 69.

tradition, which brought the whole viewpoint into disrepute later on. The Evangelicals--and Cowper as one of them--saw that a realization of human sin and helplessness was necessary before the Gospel could be seen as relevant and necessary,--as, in short, "the Good News." But in their zeal to deny man any hope of saving himself, and to ascribe all thanks for redemption to God, the Evangelicals were sometimes guilty of a distorted emphasis. Much of this emphasis came as a needed corrective for the smugness and self-sufficiency of Eighteenth Century society, but too much harping on the dark side of the picture can make, not for faith and confidence, but for despair.

In The Task, Cowper's longest and most significant poem, he criticizes "man's extravagant praise for man," and offers his own theological opinions. The poem contains many charming pictures of country life, and, in spite of long and tiresome passages, breathes a deep sympathy for humanity and a genuine faith in God. His views on grace and redemption recur again and again, and stand in contrast to his emphasis on human depravity:

> Acquaint thyself with God, if thou wouldst taste
> His works. Admitted once to His embrace,
> Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before....[26]

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[26] Cowper, op. cit., "The Task," ll. 779-781.

> Grace makes the slave a freeman. 'Tis a change
> That turns to ridicule the turgid speech
> And stately tone of moralists, who boast
> As if, like Him of fabulous renown,
> They had indeed ability to smooth
> The shag of savage nature....
> But transformation of apostate man
> From fool to wise, from earthly to divine,
> Is work for Him that made him.[27]

Thus it can be observed that Cowper followed Whitefield and Calvinistic Evangelicalism rather than Wesley and the Arminians, although it must in all cases be borne in mind that formal doctrinal considerations were secondary to the Evangelicals. He emphasizes the idea of grace directly mediated, and ascribes much to divine agency. The Evangelicalism of Cowper and the Evangelicalism of Jonathan Edwards are fundamentally the same.

Cowper's views of providence and divine sovereignty are close to those of orthodox Calvinism, and are perhaps best illustrated in the short poems on religious themes, especially in the so-called Olney Hymns.

> God moves in a mysterious way,
> His wonders to perform;
> He plants his footsteps in the sea
> And rides upon the storm.
>
> Deep in unfathomable mines
> Of never-failing skill
> He treasures up his bright designs
> And works his sovereign will.[28]

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[27] Cowper, op. cit., "The Task," ll. 688-697.

[28] Ibid., "Light Shining Out of Darkness," ll. 1-8.

For all its limitations (which are, after all, limitations derived from the human mind), here is a spiritual religion of power and grandeur; it has apprehended man's need of God, and God's readiness to help those who call upon Him. There is something thrilling in the grand old Evangelicalism which inspired the hearts of a nation in the Eighteenth Century, and which begat the poetry of Cowper. This is a religious system toward which a later age has been too often unfair. For an Evangelicalism which produced a Wilberforce could not have been a false religion, and a system which was the parent of Cowper's verse must have had something of God in it.

William Wordsworth and the Rise of Romanticism

William Wordsworth, one of the pioneers in the Romantic Movement in English literature, represents the transition from the thought of the late Eighteenth Century, dominated by the ideologies of the French Revolution, to the era of orthodoxy and conformity that is associated with Victorianism in its pure phase. Wordsworth's own life was a chronicle of movement from radicalism to conservatism. He spent thirteen months in France during the Revolution, and finally had to flee to England in 1792. Thereafter the conservative tendencies in his thought gradually gained the

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William Wordsworth and the Idea of Revolution.

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upper hand, until by 1815 he had become very orthodox, and this orthodoxy deepened, in both political and religious aspects, as the years went by. It has been said of Wordsworth that he died in 1815 and was not buried until 1850; however true this may be of his literary work, it is rather a harsh judgment to make upon his theological views, which indeed were hardly respectable, from the Christian point of view, until after 1815. It is true that Wordsworth's most original literary work was that of the period between 1798 and 1815, but it must not be supposed that his subsequent work was therefore necessarily without significance. Literary critics have often been quick to absolutize differences that are really only relative.

The motivating principle of the French Revolution, and of Wordsworth's early verse, was the dogma of the natural goodness and freedom of man. This was derived from the Deists and other rationalistic philosophers of the century preceding the Revolution, and as a doctrine it stands in opposition to the Christian dogma of Original Sin. Its spirit was analogous to that of modern positivism, and it postulated a unilinear continuity between man and nature. Wordsworth in particular takes a very high view of Nature, and frankly invests it with personality to such a pronounced degree that in his early Nature-poems he is pantheistic. Nature, as Wordsworth uses the term, is more than just the visible universe; "it

ture really only relative.

The modifying principle of the Free-to Revolution, and of Wordsworth's early verse, was the dogma of the natural goodness and freedom of man. This was derived from the Deists and other revolutionary philosophers of the preceding generation, and as a doctrine it assumed in opposition to the Puritanism, and as a doctrine it assumed in opposition to the Christian dogma of Original Sin. This belief was analogous to that of modern positivism, and it constituted a radical contrast between man and nature. Wordsworth in early life had personally no such a pessimistic despair that he this

means, sometimes, the Nature of Man, those inherent and indestructible qualities which are common to the whole race, and which form together that which we call Human Nature."[29] To the extent to which he ascribes ultimate value to Nature in this sense, then, he is not only pantheistic but also humanistic. This was exactly the form which liberalism of that day, and indeed most Nineteenth Century liberalism, ordinarily could be expected to take.

> For I have learned
> To look on nature, not as in the hour
> Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
> The still, sad music of humanity....
> .... And I have felt
> A Presence that disturbs me with the joy
> Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
> Of something far more deeply interfused,
> Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
> And the round ocean and the living air,
> And the blue sky, and in the mind of Man:
> A motion and a Spirit, that impels
> All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
> And rolls through all things.[30]

In his Ode on the Intimations of Immortality, Wordsworth sets forth his belief in the preëxistence of the soul, and argues for its continued existence after death on the basis of empirical "intuitive" evidence.

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29 Brooke, op. cit., p. 76.

30 Wordsworth, Complete Works, "Tintern Abbey," ll. 93-102.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home.[31]

These views have generally been regarded with extreme skepticism, when indeed not explicitly rejected, by the corporate Christian conscience, and are, in general, more kin to certain aspects of the Oriental religions than to Christianity.

Wordsworth did not persist in his heresies for very long, however, for he was always in the vanguard; and as the more extreme phases of the Revolutionary ideology fell into disrepute, and a return to a more balanced orthodoxy became the fashion, Wordsworth led the trend to that type of conformity which later eventuated in Victorianism, and of which the Tractarian movement was one phase. The remainder of the (politically) liberal group viewed this as a great apostasy, but, as has been already suggested, that evaluation might be accepted with some qualification. The exact motives underlying Wordsworth's action are of slight consequence, for in any case he merely represents a similar movement which took place throughout English

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31 Wordsworth, "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," ll. 58-65.

[illegible]

religious and philosophical thought (although, be it noted, the liberal trend in politics continued throughout the century, being climaxed, in a sense, by the Reform Bills of the 1830's).

In short, the power of Deism and Rationalism was broken, and the Romantic principle, which was characterized by an emphasis on emotion (including aesthetics) and an interest in the past, was in the ascendancy. Free-thinking, in the Eighteenth Century sense, became passé; and the Tractarians, who were in the Romantic tradition, made their appearance almost twenty years before Wordsworth's death. The heritage left by the Evangelical revival constituted the religion of the masses, and this persisted more or less throughout the century.

Wordsworth's later position is perhaps best illustrated in the Ecclesiastical Sonnets, part of which were published around 1827 and the remainder about 1842. There are passages of genuine beauty and power in these sonnets, although perhaps the greater part of them is of rather mediocre literary value. They are most interesting, however, not as literary pieces at all, but as illustrations of Wordsworth's more mature theological opinions. When compared with the earlier poems of the 1798-1815 period, they give representative evidence of the trends of the dominant modes of religious-literary thought. Note that the transition is

from an advanced emphasis on the "self"--the individual soul--to an emphasis on the community--the Church. In spite of strong Low Church and Evangelical, and even individualistic, traces still remaining, one detects something of the spirit of Seventeenth Century Laudianism. Ten years after the first Sonnets had been published, this spirit burst into full flower in the Oxford Movement.

The Ecclesiastical Sonnets review the whole history of Christianity in England, in the form of a sonnet sequence, with interesting doctrinal comments along the way. Wordsworth praises the Reformers very highly:

> Holy and heavenly spirits as they are,
> Spotless in life, and eloquent as wise,
> With what entire affection do they prize
> Their Church reformed![32]

In spite of his high esteem for the Reformers (even those who were Calvinistically inclined), Wordsworth is surprisingly sympathetic toward the Catholic background and Catholic elements of the national Church. He addresses a remarkably tender poem to the Virgin:

> Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrost
> With the least shade of thought to sin allied;
> Woman above all women glorified,
> Our tainted nature's solitary boast....[33]

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[32] Wordsworth, Works, "Ecclesiastical Sonnets," XL, ll. 1-4.

[33] Ibid., XXV, ll. 1-4.

The fact that he who uses the very phrase "our tainted nature" was once a disciple of the French Revolution and the doctrine of the natural goodness of man, is sufficient proof of transition in religious thought. There is no reason to doubt Wordsworth's honesty, either in 1792 or in 1835; the violent, stormy doctrines of Revolution and humanism had been quieted under the influence of a deepening faith nurtured in the bosom of the Church of England. Where once there was the fiery radical, now there is the gentle Christian, the man of faith.

Wordsworth died in 1850, and by the time of his passing the Oxford Movement was already well under way. The transition had been effected.

Keble and the Catholic Revival

The later aspects of Evangelicalism and the Romantic Movement combined to give birth to the most significant religious phenomenon of Nineteenth Century Europe: the Oxford Movement. Briefly defined, the Oxford Movement represents a revival of Catholic elements in the Church of England. It was, in many ways, the most stimulating religious movement the the English Church had ever seen, and few revivals of religion have quickened thought, debate, and scholarly inquiry as did the Oxford Movement. But, like the Evangelical Movement of the preceding century, it was not just an affair

of the intellect, a matter of doctrinal debate; it was an affair of spiritual religion, a revivification of piety. To think, as is too commonly done, that the Oxford Movement consisted simply in a series of quarrels over ceremonial and liturgical practises, is to misapprehend its whole spirit. In its purest phase, its concern with ceremonial points was really rather slight. Again it is inadequate to think of the Movement in purely doctrinal terms. The Oxford Movement was basically the rediscovery of an attitude. It was an attitude which consisted partly in emotional protest against the steadily cooling embers of a once-warm Evangelicalism, a rather dull and stodgy sort of Churchmanship, and partly in the Romantic interest in the past, and in the Middle Ages in particular. It would not be amiss to say that the romantic medievalism of Scott and Walpole, in Scottish border romance and Gothic tale, had its religious counterpart in the Oxford Movement. Literary romanticism had about reached its highest intensity in the year in which John Keble preached his famous Assize Sermon at Oxford.

The Oxford Movement centers, then, around historic-mindedness. It has a strong view of the "given-ness" of religion, and hence is concerned to preserve the status quo--the faith once for all delivered to the saints. A nostalgia for the past, often combined with a genuinely humanitarian

social passion, is a common trade-mark of Romanticism. The liturgical revival connected with the Oxford Movement sought beauty, and the quest for the aesthetic is also a Romantic trait--indeed, the Romantic equivalent of the Classical quest for order and proportion. Thus, Wordsworth prepared the way for that general quality of thought which underlay the Oxford Movement.

The tendency to conformity is likely to be one result of historic-mindedness. Reverence for Tradition is almost a sure result of any deep sympathy with the past, and conformity is the shadow of Tradition. Of course, there were strongly Classical (in the Eighteenth-Century sense) elements in the thought of the Tractarians--especially Newman; but the Romantic principle lay at its heart.

The sacramental point of view is the outstanding characteristic of the Oxford Movement. Correctly understood, this strikes an amazingly good balance between the subjective and objective elements of religious experience, and, in a way, stands at the frontier of poetic experience. It is, however, easily capable of naïvely playing into the hands of a sort of religious atavism.

The longing for the fulness of the Church is another element in the spirituality of the Oxford Movement, from which springs the (at times) almost morbid interest in Apostolic Succession and valid ordination. Back of this longing is implicit a conviction that the Church is not just

another prosaic human institution, organized and perpetuated for utilitarian reasons, but rather the already-sanctified fellowship of the redeemed humanity, a visible yet supra-cosmic organism at the very heart of which lies, not a concern for the practical, not a merely social purpose or temporal problem, but the Savior of Man.

It is more or less this sense of the fulness of the Church which prompted Keble to write The Christian Year. The Christian Year was published in 1827, five years before the Assize Sermon, and can hardly be termed an Anglo-Catholic document; it does, however, point toward a union of Church-life and individual Christian piety which is an essentially Catholic principle.

> Keble's Christian Year sounds now like a Greek Chorus full of melodious and mystic prelude of what was to come in sterner fact. The Christian Year reads now like the feeble piping of Pan caught and confined in a rural rectory. Keble wrote like Wordsworth, in a surplice, and according to Pusey that Laureate wished to assist a revision. Keble was tame and misty but he secured the overwhelming admiration of Churchmen who admired his verse as the bride admires her own wedding-cake.
>
> The Christian Year was the Psalter of the Tractarians. It is now unread as poetry and unsung as Hymns. The Third Edition had six additional poems, including one for Guy Fawkes Day....[34]

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[34] Shane Leslie, The Oxford Movement 1833-1933, pp. 49-50.

That Keble's poetry is of minor literary importance is self-evident, but it does represent elements of the revival of piety along Catholic lines. Keble himself

> ...placed but little value on the poems, and it was only at the repeated solicitations of his father and friends that he finally permitted them to be published, anonymously, in 1827. They at once leaped into the most phenomenal popularity.[35]

Before Keble's death, the book had gone into ninety-five editions; but today it is seldom read, even by Church people.

Keble was Professor of Poetry at Oxford, as well as the pioneer in the Tractarian Movement. He was born April 25, 1792, of a family of staunch nonjuring traditions, and had been ordained in 1816. He accepted the chair of poetry at Oxford in 1831. It was at St. Mary's, Oxford, that he preached his famous Assize Sermon which marked the beginning of the Tractarian Movement. It is interesting to note that in its earliest stages the Oxford Movement was largely just an anti-Erastian movement.

Keble shared with the other Tractarians a strong and consistent view of authority--the authority of God and the authority of the Church. This attitude sprang indirectly from reverence for the past and directly from reverence for Tradition. It is not surprising, therefore, to

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[35] Allan Sutherland, Famous Hymns of the World, p. 105.

...played but little value on the pyres,
and it was only at the reported solicita-
tions of the Indians who friends that he
finally ventured them to be pacified,
anonymously, in 1827. They at once
issued [illegible] the most uncommend ordi-
nary.[illegible]

find the ideal of obedience and submission occupying a rather prominent place in Keble's thought.

So when the Spirit of our God
Came down his flock to find
A voice from Heaven was heard abroad,
A rushing, mighty wind.

It fills the Church of God; it fills
The sinful world around;
Only in stubborn hearts and wills
No place for it is found.

Come Lord, come Wisdom, Love, and Power,
Open our ears to hear;
Let us not miss th' accepted hour;
Save, Lord, by Love or Fear.[36]

Generally speaking, Keble's theology as expressed in his poems is quite conventional (to our day, at least, which accepts certain fruits of the Oxford Movement as axiomatic), and the fact that the poetry itself is often rather colorless does not make the picture any brighter. The passion for social reform does not burn as brightly in him as it does in the Anglo-Catholics of a later period; indeed, Keble is willing to be content with whatever Providence sees fit to give him:

And as this landscape broad--earth, sea,
and sky,--
All centres in thine eye,
So all God does, if rightly understood,
Shall work thy final good.[37]

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[36]John Keble, Christian Year, "Whitsunday," in Oxford Book of Regency Verse, p. 596.

[37]John Keble, Where Is Thy Favored Haunt?, ll. 45-48.

The objection to such a statement as this would not be that it is untrue, but that it is unoriginal. It is possible for something to be so clearly, so completely, and so undeniably true that it succeeds in being merely platitudinous. And religion is by no means a necessary exception to this.

Keble, like Wordsworth, is less important for intrinsic merit than for the fact that he led the way, that he was a pioneer. Even though he may have been a mediocre poet, he at least had sufficient insight to detect the intimate bond that exists between religious experience and poetry, and to choose the latter as his medium.

One may no doubt accuse the Tractarians of many shortcomings, but one cannot accuse them of lack of spiritual religion, and still less of stupidity. That they were men of great power is proved by the fact that there is still an Anglo-Catholic party. With the exception of the Reformers themselves, no group or party has made such a definite impress upon the Church of England. The principles for which they stood must have been needed to some extent, or they would never have survived the storm of criticism and hostility as well as they have.

The most serious fault of the Tractarians is their tendency to be backward-looking, their sometimes rather petty preoccupation with the past. Unless qualified by a strong Evangelical impulse, this tends toward a disastrous

egocentricity in the Church. The Church, to be truly Catholic, must be fundamentally Evangelical, in the sense that she must ever proclaim the Gospel to the unredeemed.

But, all in all, the Oxford Movement brought many blessings to the Church; among them, a revival of spirituality, and a renewed appreciation of the beautiful. The life of Anglicanism was made deeper and more distinctive by the Oxford Movement. And it was John Keble, poet and priest, who began it all.

Tennyson and Victorianism

In spite of the power and significance of the Oxford Movement, it never dominated the Church life of the Victorian era; in fact, throughout this whole period, it was usually on the defensive. Certain of its tenets (e. g., a rather strong view of the ministry, and some ceremonial practises such as the Eastward position) gradually were accepted by the substantial majority of Churchmen, in the course of time, but Anglo-Catholicism has never succeeded in permeating the whole Church, and this was especially noticeable in Victorian days.

The Oxford Movement was paralleled by another movement, of equal influence although usually not so well defined nor so consciously organized. This movement was first called "Germanising" (especially at Oxford), and

later was termed the "Broad Church" Movement. As the earlier name suggests, it originally grew out of influences of the German universities, and it stood for the same general principles as did the early Unitarians in New England. Just as the Oxford Movement developed from the tradition of the Nonjurors, so the Broad Church Movement developed from the tradition of the Latitudinarians and the Eighteenth-Century Rationalists. Charles Darwin published his Origin of the Species in 1859, and this work was at once a blow to the comfortable old orthodox Evangelicalism and an impetus to the Broad Church Movement. The development of the natural sciences in the second half of the Nineteenth Century created problems of faith for those who had always accepted the doctrine of verbal inspiration of Scripture. The natural science of that day was both cruder and more arrogant than its more judicious counterpart of seventy years later, but there was a storm of controversy, centering particularly around the doctrines of evolution and natural selection, which a later age looks upon as having been largely unnecessary. But the fact that it can be viewed as unnecessary is proof that the Broad Church Movement has accomplished its work.

The basic tenets of the Broad Church or Modernist party consist in a desire to accept scientific methods of Biblical scholarship, critical methods of dealing with Church history, theology, and other aspects of traditional

Christianity, and, in practise, a more or less pronounced inclination in the direction of humanism and rationalism. Most of these principles are now accepted to some degree by all parties within the Church, including the more conservative Anglo-Catholics. The modernist principles have perhaps been better synthesized with the traditional faith in the Anglican Church than in any other Christian communion. The more specifically rationalistic elements in the Broad Church position have generally found little favor outside that party itself.

The important fact is that the things which gave rise to the Modernist Movement, and which made it necessary, are responsible for some of the more distinctive aspects of Victorian religious thought in general. This type of religious thought is nowhere better illustrated than in the poems of Alfred Tennyson, who became Laureate in 1850. Much of his thinking on religious themes can best be understood in the light of the conflicts presented by natural science and the various non-theistic cosmologies for which it was responsible. Faith and knowledge were more likely to be thrown into sharper juxtaposition than either modern scientific or modern theological thought would warrant.

> We have but faith: we cannot know;
> For knowledge is of things we see....[38]

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[38] Alfred Tennyson, In Memoriam, ll. 21-22, sec. 1.

The average Victorian, of whom Tennyson is the supreme example, no doubt thought of faith in the Scholastic sense of (essentially) hypothesis, which would later be confirmed and "verified" by empirical knowledge. The classical concept of faith as spiritual knowledge would no doubt have appeared to be obscurantist to an era which was anxious to defend religion at the bar of science.

Tennyson, himself the son of a clergyman, always evidenced that subconscious tendency to conform, to be moderate, and to "muddle through," which has been characteristic of so many Englishmen. He invariably prefers the middle road, as does his nation. He inherited the intellectual tendencies, as well as the Laureate, of Wordsworth. He is sometimes virile, yet more often sentimental; but, in any case, he loves the status quo.

The Victorian age believed in inevitable progress, and it was, therefore, optimistic in its general outlook on things. So, likewise, is Tennyson.

> Behold, we know not anything;
> I can but trust that good shall fall
> At last--far off--at last, to all,
> And every winter change to spring.[39]

One might be inclined at first glance to suspect Tennyson of hypocrisy and cant, but it should be remembered

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[39] Tennyson, In Memoriam, sec. LIV, ll. 13-16.

that the more cynical opinions of a more turbulent era are not of retroactive applicability. Tennyson is sincere; his only limitation is that which all men share to some extent: he is the child of his age.

Tennyson is heavily tinged with the moralism which of all the characteristics of the Victorian age is best remembered. This moralism is also sincere, and seems to be based on insight and reflection, rather than merely accepted on authority. It is intimately related to his idealistic-romantic mode of thought, and to his optimistic views of progress. There is a trace of Broad Church humanism in this.

The central spiritual problem for Tennyson is not the nature and attributes of God, or even, as it was for the Tractarians, the nature of the true Church. The main problem for Tennyson seems to be the question of personal immortality. This is the crux of religious thought for him. The influence of natural science, which tended to reduce man to a merely physical organism and hence to deny personal immortality, forms the background of Tennyson's thought on this point.

> The thought in his mind would seem to be this: supposing death to have the final word, what does this spell? His answer is that human life would be a dark and meaningless affair. If immortality were a fiction, this is a godless world, ruled, it may be, by some almighty demon, but a world without God. Such an outlook would involve the utter

> collapse of the religious nature; for it could not sustain itself. Whatever else might be left, religion in any true sense would vanish. Life would sink into utter worthlessness, and moral things would hardly be worth a moment's discrimination.[40]

Somehow, one suspects that the latter conclusion is the most obnoxious to Tennyson, and that he argues for immortality largely because it supports his moralism. But this is not to be taken as an unworthy reason, least of all by the Twentieth Century, for which the problem of moral consequences is in many ways the basic problem.

Tennyson's view of God is the kindly one fostered by the Broad Church Movement, not the stern and sovereign God of the Evangelicals. He makes much of the place of love in the entire scheme of things, and one suspects him of thinking of love in slightly sentimental terms. The objectivity and vigor of the New Testament _agape_ is somehow absent from the love of which Tennyson thinks. Nevertheless, he treats the subject with genuine spiritual insight and sensitivity.

> Who trusted God was love indeed,
> And love Creation's final law....[41]

> Love is and was my Lord and King,
> And in his presence I attend
> To hear the tidings of my friend,
> Which every hour his couriers bring.

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[40] W. M. Auld, _The Mount of Vision_, p. 131.

[41] Tennyson, _In Memoriam_, LVI, ll. 13-14.

Love was and is my King and Lord,
And will be, tho' as yet I keep
Within his court on earth, and sleep
Encompass'd by his faithful guard,

And hear at times a sentinel
Who moves about from place to place,
And whispers to the worlds of space,
In the deep night, that all is well.[42]

Here is a depth of spirituality and an exquisiteness of expression which commands respect, even of those who would find fault with Tennyson in his lesser moods. This optimism may be the result of blind spots, and yet it is not superficial, for it gropes in its blindness and lays hold on a reality so great that it cannot be comprehended--still less, analyzed.

In spite of conflicts with natural science, the Church of the Victorian age was a Church in expansion, and, for all its serious limitations, a healthy Church. In spite of a rather naïve trust in progress, the attitudes of Victorian Churchmen, of which Tennyson is representative, were essentially positive and healthy-minded. There is a refreshing absence of that spirit of despair and defeat which came after the World War. But there is also an absence of the poignant sense of tragedy, the insight into a darker fourth dimension of life, and consequently that sense of desperate need, which came with the post-War Twentieth Century.

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[42] Tennyson, In Memoriam, CXXVI, ll. 1-12.

T. S. Eliot and the Twentieth Century

The Victorian age, that era of optimism and confidence in inevitable progress, did not come finally to an end until the World War of 1914-18 shook civilization to its foundations. Indeed, the Nineteenth Century itself did not end till then; and it has been very wisely observed that the end of centuries is not always to be computed in double zeros.

It may yet be too early to judge the Twentieth Century, for in literature and religion, as well as in politics, things are seen in their true perspective only through the lens of history. All ages no doubt have seemed turbulent to the more sensitive and thoughtful, and therefore much of the tempestuous insecurity of which modern intellectuals have complained may be no greater than that of which their forefathers complained,--or, more often, knew and did not complain. There would seem to be, however, an objective residuum of cultural instability and change, brought on by the holocaust of 1914-18, which touched almost every department of life and thought with its unsettling hand. The Victorian trust in the inherent goodness of man and society, and in the assurance of progress, was severely shaken. Cynicism, defeatism, and a negative attitude toward the past have generally supplanted in the post-war generations the softer thought-forms of their more complacent

Victorian fathers. "Realism" is the word which dominates modern language. There is an anxiousness to view the sterner aspects of life, and, often, to make much of them.

Post-war religious philosophy is rather well illustrated in Barthianism, Lundensianism, and equivalent modes of thought. These particular movements have been translated into the peculiarly Anglican idiom, usually to the strengthening of the Anglo-Catholic position. There has been a return to essentially Evangelical emotional patterns, although the old Evangelical party, inheritor of the traditions of Wesley and Cowper, has seemingly not been able to make its position appear relevant to the critical post-war mentality. T. S. Eliot illustrates the sense of despair which hangs over the modern world, and the turning to authoritarian religious systems, in the case of the religious-minded. T. S. Eliot, once noisily secular, has been converted to Anglo-Catholicism. Eliot, both in his literary technique and in the content of his earlier poems, typified the modern revolt. There is an absolutistic and eschatalogical note in all this: no half-way stops, no compromises, are permissible. And the sense of frustration, of futility and cynical despair, so characteristic of the post-war world is evidenced in one of Eliot's poems of 1917:

Wipe your hand across your mouth, and laugh;
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.[43]

In The Waste Land (1922) there is a combination of this sense of hopelessness and despair which attended his secular days, wedded to a Christian faith and a Christian symbolism. In The Waste Land Eliot's apprehension and appropriation of Christian values is less complete than in the subsequent poems. Yet this remains one of his most powerful pieces. The sense of need of a categorically more adequate reality, a spiritual order, is as deeply felt as in any Evangelical convicted of sin.

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest burning[44]

This sense of need differs from that of the Eighteenth Century Evangelicals in one important respect: it is bred of social crisis and social disintegration. Thus, even in its truly Evangelical phases, Eliot's religion is oriented in the direction of the community, and hence bears one of the fundamental marks of Agnlo-Catholicism.

Eliot uses a startling and striking poetic technique, in which he combines experiment with heavy borrowings from the armories of the past. This is in itself

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[43] Thomas S. Eliot, Collected Poes, "The Prelude," ll. 52-54.

[44] Eliot, "The Waste Land," ll. 308-311.

almost an Anglican method of procedure in itself. He not only quotes, but paraphrases, the great masters of the medium; and yet he is of all modern poets one of the most original.

The patterns of Christian spirituality are likewise well illustrated in Ash Wednesday, one of the later poems. The poet shows himself to be utterly surfeited with the secular system.

> Because I do not hope to turn again....
> Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope
> I no longer strive to strive towards such things
> (Why should the agèd eagle stretch its wings?)
> Why should I mourn
> The vanished power of the usual reign?[45]

The poem continues, with a strange and yet powerful rhythm, to reach a climax of resignation to the holy will:

> Teach us to sit still
> Even among these rocks,
> Our peace in His will
> And even among these rocks
> Sister, mother
> And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,
> Suffer me not to be separated
> And let my cry come unto Thee.[46]

By a process of dialectic, the cynic in despair turns to the religion of authority, and achieves, not temporal optimism and still less self-confidence, but that stern

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[45] Eliot, "Ash Wednesday," ll. 1-6.

[46] Ibid., ll. 212-219.

and sober trust in a sovereign God which characterized the prophets of the eras of social disintegration--Augustine, and Luther, and Calvin.... There is a triumphant Augustinianism implicit in Eliot's verse, and an insight into crisis, an analysis of despair, such as breeds in the thoughtfully religious man the staunchest faith in God.

Again let it be said that it is probably too early to evaluate the spiritual tendencies of the post-war Twentieth Century; but the dominant tone of religious thought, especially as illustrated by Eliot, seems to be a return to strongly supernatural and authoritarian systems, based on despair and distrust in temporal processes, and urged by the tensions of social crisis. Indeed, the outstanding mark of the Twentieth Century is tension. It is, therefore, not to be wondered at that Eliot "has spoken more convincingly of confusion and doubt than of a difficult serenity."[47] But when the Twentieth Century does find its "difficult serenity" it will find it in a faith in God.

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47 Babette Deutsch, This Modern Poetry, p. 128.

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CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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Outside of liturgy, which is by its very nature less flexible, perhaps the best index to the character of religious life of a given Communion is its religious poetry. Poetry and liturgy have in common the fact that they are reactions to an identical experience: man standing on the frontier of the realm of the spirit, and grasping fragments of Eternity. The poetic and the liturgical are united in the hymn, and as a *genre* the hymn of adoration is probably the highest reach of a community's reaction to its vision of God. Religious poetry and Church liturgy rise out of the same ultimate category. Both make use of deeply rhythmic relationships, and are therefore seen to be based upon alternate tension and relaxation. These alternate tensions are one of the basic interpolations of time-space in religious processes, as in God there can be no rhythm, for in the Eternal there is no mutation. Even in this fundamentally temporal aspect, however, a genuine unity underlies the alternation of rhythm, and the entire situation reveals the fact of experience of final unity (the

eternal order) which is translated into the time-space order of relationships through the device of rhythm. It is this which makes poetry closer to religion than is, say, physics.

A study of the principles behind the great historic liturgies of Christendom reveals patterns of tension, relaxation, and climax; a study of mystical or ascetical theology divulges similar patterns. In poetry, of course, they are much more explicit.[48] Poetry and belief are likewise intimately related, for poetry is highly conditioned by inner attitudes, being essentially impressionistic in method. "Poetry can be an independent way to the Truth, only when the Truth has already been accepted by the poet."[49]

The spiritual life of the Church of England since the Reformation has been cast into some general types, as shown in its poetry. The first type is the religious poetry of the Reformation period, dominated by Calvinism and Platonism. In the second period, the Seventeenth Century, the poetry was strongly tinged with Arminian theology, Catholic metaphorical style, aestheticism, traditionalism, and, to a much smaller extent, the prophetic values of Puritanism.

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48 Except in vers libre, in which rhythmic patterns are quite subtle.

49 S. L. Bethell, "Poetry and Belief," Theology, XXXIX:229 (July, 1939), p. 35.

The Eighteenth Century was marked in its early period by rationalism and a meagre spirituality; in its later period it witnessed the great Evangelical revival, and the cult of sensibility. This sensibility grew up into Romanticism. The Romantic Movement, lasting approximately from 1790 until 1833, began with the humanistic and libertarian philosophy of the French Revolution, but through its increasing interest in the past, and especially in medievalism, became rather traditional-minded in its later days. Out of this rose the Oxford Movement, which had its roots in the Gothic and other romantic literature of the era just preceding. The Broad Church Movement appeared shortly afterward, and probably served as a more fertile ground for the growth of Victorianism. The Victorian age was characterized by a type of religion which tended to optimism, moralism, and a faith in social progress. The World War of 1914-1918 put a violent end to this tendency--or at least amputated it--and out of the resulting chaos and despair came a movement back toward a strong supernatural type of religion, more or less authoritarian in emphasis, and reaffirming certain traditional values.

There runs a single thread through all this: Anglican religious thought is bi-polar. On this hand it is Catholic, on the other hand it is Protestant, and so on. Anglicanism has usually run in at least two channels at the

same time; yet never in unrelated channels, for Anglicanism has a unity more basic (and more subtle) than that of Roman Catholicism.

Anglican thought in the Twentieth Century, in the contemporary period, evidences important spiritual trends. The traditional alliance between theology and literature in Anglicanism has been maintained. The Twentieth Century has been an age of Ideologies--and of mythologies; and this gives literature a peculiar relevance and an enhanced dignity. The rapid growth of periodical literature during the past century has made the printed page one of the most potent allies of modern organized Christianity. The myth of Science is the most widespread cultural error with which the Church has to deal; modern unbelief and secularism excuse themselves on the basis of being "scientific," just as their Eighteenth Century counterparts proudly styled themselves "rational." The outworn scientific viewpoints of the later Victorian period dominate the thought of the man in the street; the scientists themselves are generally likely to be less dogmatic on philosophical and religious points.

Secularism, though certainly not unknown in any age, seems to have become more coherent, better organized, and more articulate in the present century. The fundamental dichotomy between the Church and the world, between the community of believers and the community of unbelief

(however rationalized or disguised), has been brought into sharper outline. The most definite example of this is the conflict between Marxist communism and the Orthodox Church in Russia, but what is explicit there is somewhat more implicit elsewhere. Much of this is a by-product of social transitions, and is only rarely a simple anti-clericalism.

The Twentieth Century, age of the myth of Science and a dozen different "ideologies," is an age of coëxistent incompatibles. The Anglican Church, with its Catholic and Modernist parties, has its own coëxistent incompatibles. The Twentieth Century, both inside and outside the Church, is a riddle not yet solved.

But as the century progresses, whatever religious experience there is will eventually be cast into song, and through this song some future generation will come to know the inner recesses of our faith.

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